

**BLIND TASK FORCE MEETING MINUTES  
MAY 7, 2003**

**I. Introductions:**

The meeting started at 10:15 a.m. and was called to order by Chairperson Joe Sartorius. Each attendee introduced himself or herself.

Those in attendance were:

Joe Sartorius  
Steven Berman  
Debbie Head  
Cindy Dowis  
Chris Craig  
Julie Ituarte  
Sheila Wright  
Rosalie Backer-Thompson (representing Dennis Miller)  
Melodie Friedebach  
Russ McCampbell  
Kent Kolaga  
Grenetha Baldwin  
Karen Berley  
David Leyland  
Donna Borgmeyer  
Those absent were:  
Corinne Harmon  
Dennis Miller  
James Pelfrey

Guests:

Julie Ituarte  
Betty Davidson  
Teresa Tometich

**II. Approval of Minutes:**

Braille, large-print and regular-sized print copies of the minutes from the previous four meetings were distributed (6/24/02, 9/10/02, 12/12/02 and 2/26/03). Several changes were made on the minutes from 2/26/03. A motion was made to accept the minutes as corrected and was passed unanimously. These changes involved correction of name spellings, adding the names of members present, adding the awarding of a plaque to Grenetha Baldwin (for past service as committee chairperson), and moving a few announcements to different paragraphs. The Blind Task Force Secretary, Steve Berman, will make all the necessary changes and send a revised copy of the 2/26/03 minutes to all committee members. Members are expected to review these changes prior to the next meeting and be prepared to make changes as needed.

Concerning the other minutes, a sub-committee was formed to review and revise them. Steve Berman, Debbie Head, and Joe Sartorius will handle this task with the aim of providing in a timely fashion a complete set of minutes from the previous meeting.

**III. Process for Development of Minutes:**

The process for development of minutes for Blind Task Force meetings was discussed at length. At the present time a note-taker has been in attendance at the meetings to produce a summary of agenda items discussed. These notes have been submitted to the Task Force Secretary for reviewing and editing and to produce a legible document that best summarizes the flow of the meeting. The revised and edited document is then submitted to the Task Force Chairperson for review. The chair and vice-chair will review the minutes before they are sent out to committee members for review. Once these steps have been completed, a draft copy is sent out to all committee members for review. All committee members review the draft copy and submit

feedback on any errors or changes that need to be made. Changes are made as needed before a final copy is submitted as the official document.

A discussion was held concerning what items should be included in the minutes in addition to things that have been included in the past. Basic items to be included are the names of attendees (including guests), absences, time the meeting started, motions suggested and whether they passed or failed, reports to be submitted on subjects related to committee business, and the time the meeting ended.

The committee members agreed that a draft copy of the meeting minutes would be submitted to members at least two weeks before the next meeting so that there will be sufficient time to review and make changes as needed. DESE will post the approved minutes on the BTF website.

IV. Review Agenda:

Committee members present reviewed the proposed agenda for the meeting. The only item on the agenda that was amended was item #12 dealing with Blind Skills Specialist updates and announcements. It was agreed that there would be a discussion of the expenditure of unencumbered funds added to this agenda item. It was also mentioned that Teresa Tometich will be posting the Blind Task Force agenda on the DESE website at least 24 hours before the meeting in accordance with the Sunshine Law. Russ McCampbell made a motion to adopt the revised agenda, Chris Craig seconded the motion, which was passed by a vote of 14 – 0.

V. Current Issues:

No current issues other than items on the agenda were submitted.

VI. VI Personnel Preparation Update:

Chris Craig at SMSU submitted a \$1.2 million grant for a multi-state teacher preparation program to be known as Project Diverse. The grant was submitted in February, 2003, and will be resubmitted if not approved. The grant will be for a multi-state area covering Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma. Julie Ituarte has already developed some of the on-line courses, including a beginner's course on Braille. Chris Craig and Julie Ituarte will determine the sequence of the courses leading to a Masters degree. Orientation and Mobility will be presented as an on-line course with fieldwork to be done at a site to be named later (possibly Missouri School for the Blind). Chris and Julie announced that the project will proceed, but at a much slower pace if the grant is not approved. The grant will create a multi-state accreditation agreement between Missouri, Oklahoma and Kansas. The grant will allow up to 20 students to pursue a Masters degree in the Education of the Blind and Visually Impaired.

VII. VI Praxis Update:

A group appointed by DESE will determine what the cut score will be for the VI Praxis Test. The DESE group will be working towards having the VI Praxis process, including the passing grade, in place by Fall 2003. The Praxis consists of all multiple choice questions. All applicants for VI certification in the state of Missouri, including those persons with certification from other states, will have to pass the VI Praxis in order to get Missouri VI certification.

A discussion was held concerning roadblocks for people attempting to get VI certification in Missouri. Course work can be difficult for many people to complete, too many extra courses are required, and it seems unfair to have such a difficult certification process when there are many students in Missouri not being served by a VI teacher. Kent Kolaga suggested a motion to have an ad-hoc committee study these issues. Chris Craig will be the chairperson of this committee, Kent Kolaga will be the co-chair, and Steve Berman and Russ McCampbell will also serve on this committee. Steve Berman seconded the motion. Teresa Tometich will forward information To Melodie Friedebach on 2 specific cases, so that Mel may look into them.

VIII. Legislative Update:

Sheila informed the task force that HR173, the Instructional Materials Act, was still being considered by Congress. The Senate version has not been introduced and the hope is that the bill will become an amendment of IDEA Reauthorization. A uniform standard for textbooks in special

media will hopefully be part of this bill. The National Repository will not be a part of the amendment. A major feature of the bill will be to make it mandatory for all textbook publishers to provide an alternate format (Braille, large-print, tape or disk). It is hoped that the Senate will pass this bill by May. Another feature of the bill will be to have publishers send to school districts a version of the textbook in electronic format to be reproduced in the needed format.

IX. National Agenda Update:

Corinne Harmon was ill and was unable to attend this meeting of the Blind Task Force. No update on the National Agenda was supplied.

X. Membership – Statute vs. Bylaws:

The bylaws of the Blind Task Force state that if a member misses 3 consecutive meetings for non-health reasons, then he/she needs to be replaced. A discussion was held concerning a member who has missed 3 consecutive meetings for non-health reasons, but who has expressed a desire to remain on the committee. A motion was made and carried to send to this committee member a letter thanking him for his service to the committee as a supportive consumer. The letter would indicate that his non-health absences have become a serious cause of concern to the Blind Task Force.

There was a discussion about beginning a search for 2 student members. It was also mentioned that there are probably visually impaired students who were never served by a vision teacher because there was no vision teacher available. These students should also be allowed to apply for the position.

A suggestion was made that the search be for one high school student and one post-secondary student. If the student needs a driver to get to the Blind Task Force meetings, there would be reimbursement for mileage and meal expenses for the driver. DESE and Rehabilitation Services for the Blind will be responsible for making these appointments. The application for student members will be posted on the DESE website. It was further added that the committee should not limit the search to public school students. The search should be open to private school students also.

Sheila made a motion to review the bylaws for membership clarification. An ad hoc committee to study this issue was organized. Sheila will be the chairperson of this committee, which will also have Grenetha Baldwin, Russ McCampbell and Dave Leyland as members. The motion passed 14 – 0.

In addition, Teresa will update the requirements for student membership and report to the task force at the next meeting.

XI. BSS Updates and Announcements:

Pam Arbeiter gave birth to a baby girl. Aundrayah Shermer has filled Julie Ituarte's position as Blind Skills Specialist. Mrs. Shermer will begin working as the Blind Skills Specialist on July 1, 2003. She has had previous experience as an Orientation and Mobility Instructor in Springfield, Missouri. Pam and Julie will continue to offer workshops for teachers of the visually impaired throughout June 2003. A message will be sent via email to Blind Task Force members concerning these workshop opportunities.

XII. Financial Update:

Due to the inability of the Columbia RPDC to fill the third BSS position, The BTF had encumbered funds that would have gone unspent without some re-designation of the funds. Following the BTF guidance, \$56,000 was reallocated to the Missouri Assistive Technology (MAT) center in Kansas City. Rosalie Backer reported that the MAT purchased VI equipment to be housed at the ETC locations for use by both the public and the BSS for their training and workshops.

These items are available through the MAT on the ETC web page at:  
<http://www.dolir.state.mo.us/matp/equiptechcon.htm>

A small amount of funds were also designated to support parents of VI children to attend the Power-Up Conference. \$1,000 was proposed with only three parents attending, for a total of \$300 expended for this activity.

After the discussion on unencumbered funds, Teresa proceeded with her financial update. Teresa reported that there is an anticipated 15 – 18% decrease in the Blind Task Force budget. The Blind Skills Specialists should remain a priority. The Columbia area had been the area determined to be the area of greatest need for the new position as determined by the APH count done by Missouri School for the Blind.

Sheila gave an update on the State budget committee hearings for VI funds. There was a discussion on the legislative process, including the ins and outs of getting legislation named and processed. A Government Affairs Committee will continue to monitor the legislative budgetary process. Sheila Wright will chair this committee. Russ McCampbell, Debbie Head, Grenetha Baldwin, Dennis Miller, and Joe Sartorius will also serve on this committee.

XIII. Study Matrix Update/Decisions and Subcommittee Update:

Missouri law continues to require the Annual Blind Literacy Study as well as the summary of items listed on the Study Matrix deemed necessary for that particular year. There was a consensus among committee members that the Task Force needs to get a handle on the Literacy Study to make it a more meaningful document. One of the concerns raised was how to condense the report. Another concern was how the “No Child Left Behind” Act figures into the study.

The Task Force made a recommendation to use a four-year rotation as follows:

1. This year’s study will include items 1-14 and items 20-21.
2. The second year of the cycle will include items 1-6, 8-16, and items 20-21.
3. The third year of the cycle will include items 1-6, 8-14, 17-18, and 20-21
4. The fourth year of the cycle will include the required items 1-6, 8-14, and 19-21

Russ McCampbell made a motion to adopt the four year cycle, which was seconded by Cindy Dowis and was passed 14 – 0. An amended motion was added that stated that the 2002 data would not have to be recollected. Items 1-5 and 20-21 will be updated as needed.

XIV. Inclement Weather Cancellation Procedures:

Darla Baker will post via email a message detailing cancellation of meetings. She also has a direct number to call at DESE (573-522-8762). A decision about the status of a meeting will be made on the afternoon before the meeting. The main DESE number is 573-751-5739). Although the primary contact will be via email, Task Force members would be advised to call Darla to confirm the cancellation.

When inclement weather is a possibility, all BTF members should check their e-mail prior to leaving for the BTF meeting. Decisions regarding cancellation will be made the day prior to the meeting if at all possible.

XV. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m. The next meeting will be held on September 17, 2003 at the CISE Center in Columbia from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.